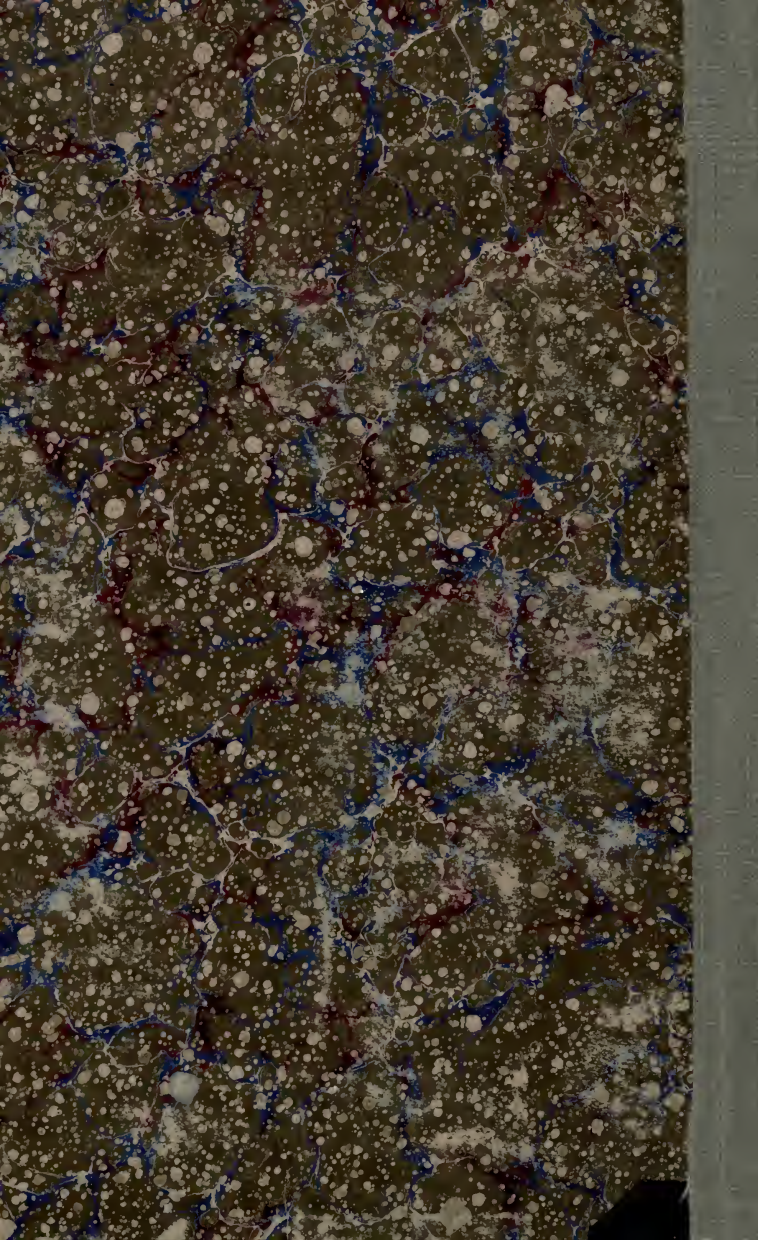
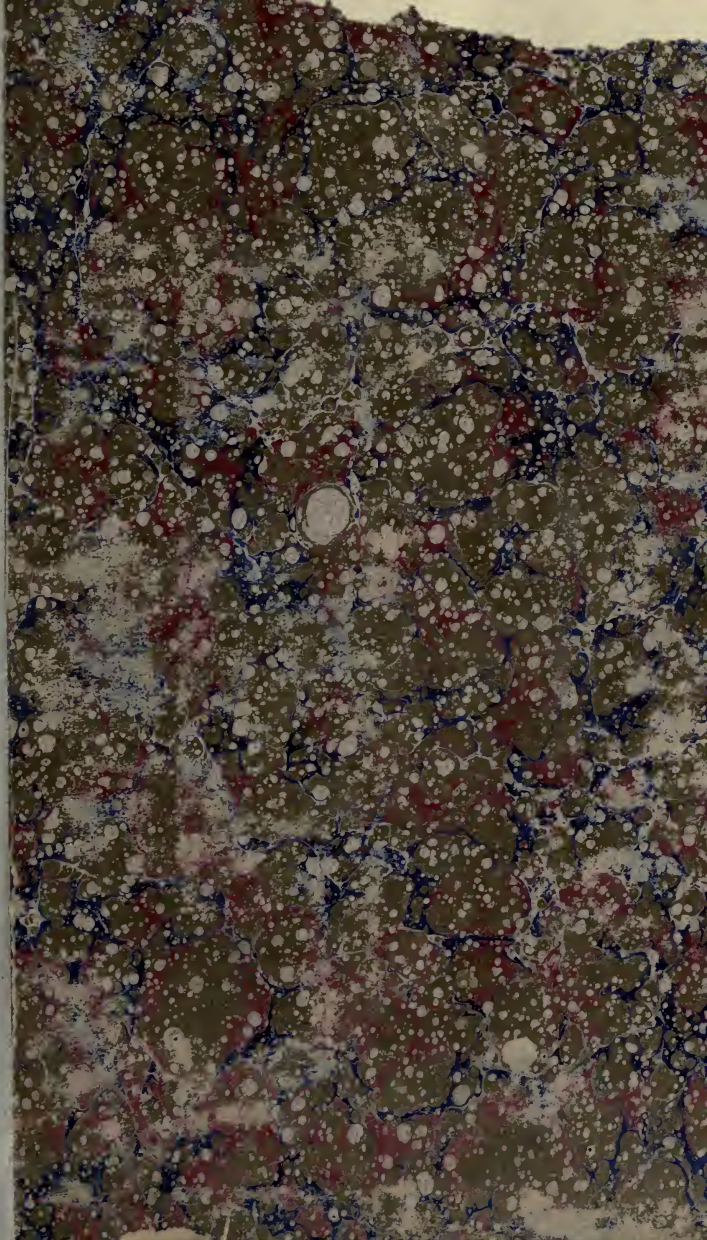
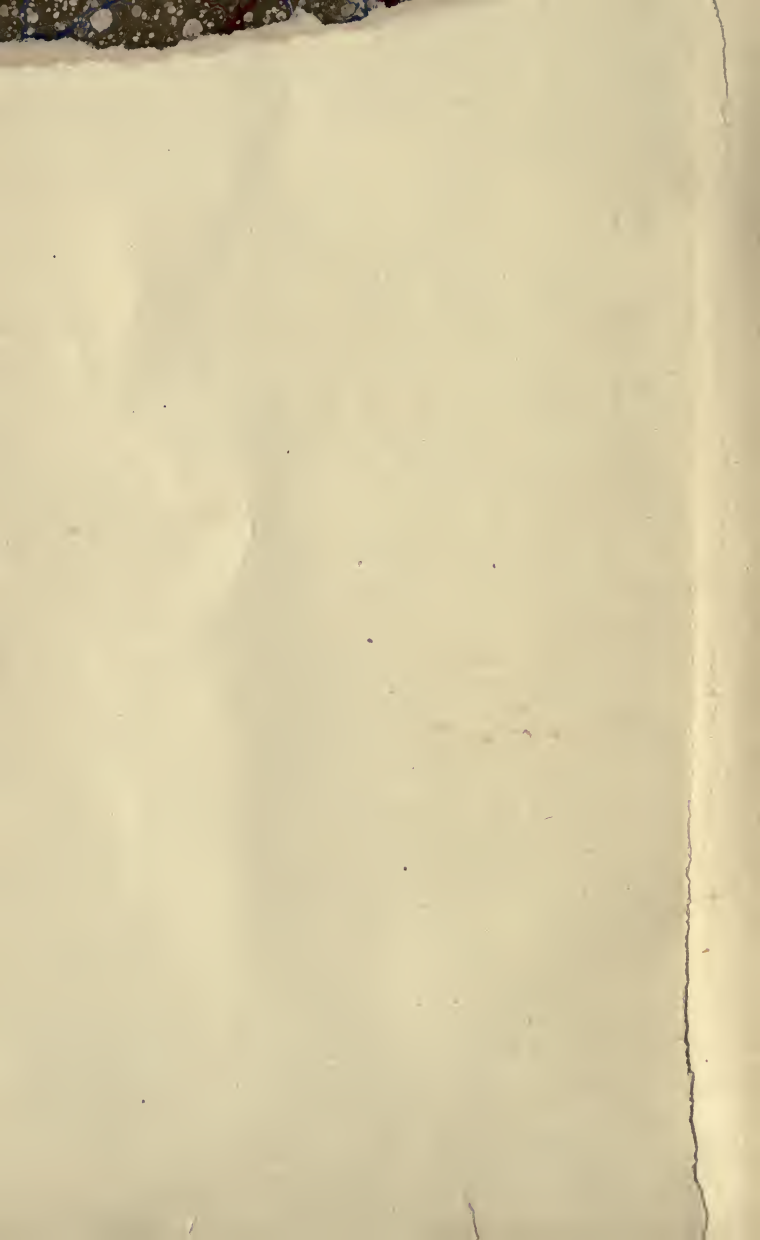


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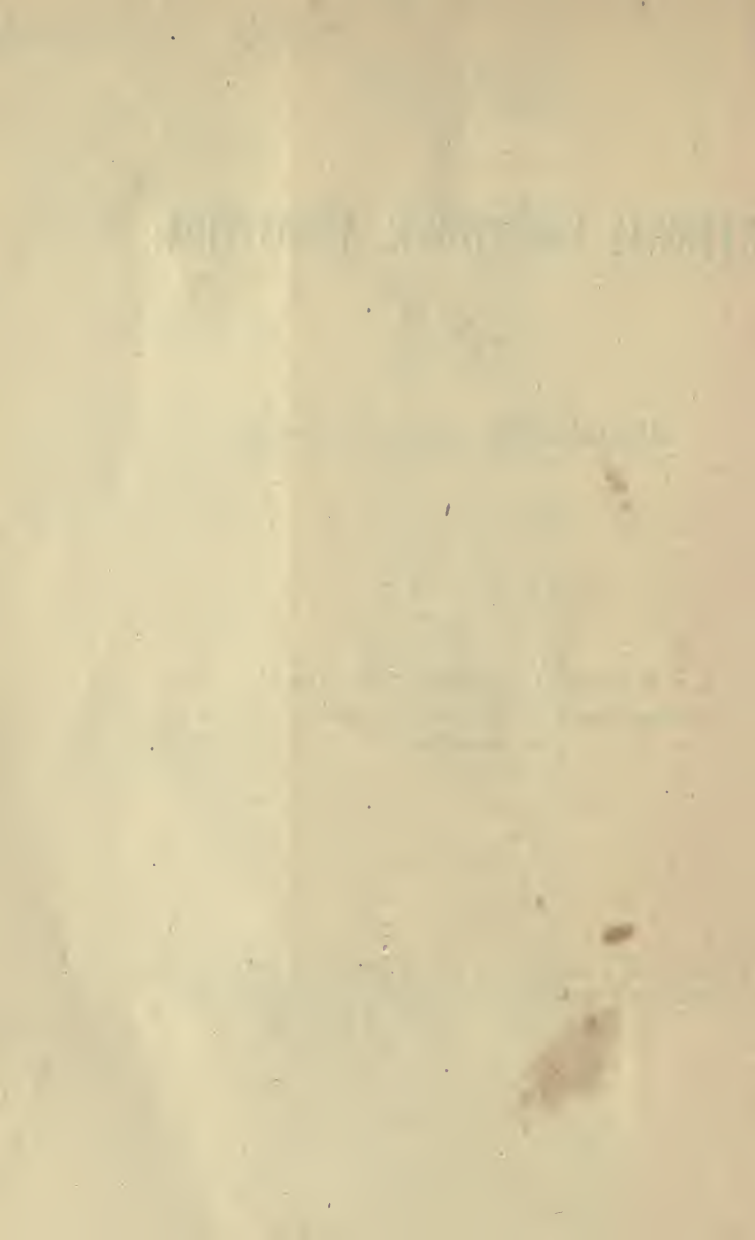
ITS

Organization and Functions.

BY

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A PAPER READ BEFORE THE DEPARTMENT OF SUPERINTEND-
ENCE OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION,
AT PHILADELPHIA, FEBRUARY 24TH, 1891.



The National Educational Association.

Thirty-three years ago last August there met in the city of Philadelphia a handful of men to organize a National Teachers' Association. The movement started in New York and Massachusetts. A call had been issued and widely circulated the year before (1856) inviting "all practical teachers in the North, the South, the East, the West, who are willing,"—these are its significant words,—“who are willing to unite in a general effort to promote the general welfare of our country by concentrating the wisdom and power of numerous minds and by distributing among all the accumulated experiences of all; who are ready to devote their energies and their means to advance the dignity, respectability, and usefulness of their calling.” A constitution was drafted and adopted, and officers were elected for the following year. The directory of the newly formed Association voted to meet in Cincinnati in August, 1858. The noteworthy feature in the constitution adopted is the government of the Association by a board of directors elected at the annual meeting. This board was to consist of a large number of counsellors, one from each state, district, or territory, together with the president, secretary, treasurer, and twelve vice-presidents. It also became the practice, even from

this early meeting, to appoint a large nominating committee,—one member from each state represented in the convention. Inasmuch as it has frequently happened that only a single delegate was present from a state, the nominating committee has been obliged to fill out its extensive list of officers by naming its own members. The first president of the Association, as well as seven of the vice-presidents and two of the counsellors, ten in all, were members of the nominating committee that reported their names. While this strikes us at first as bad form, or even as dangerous to the usefulness of the Association, a moment's reflection convinces us that the danger is imaginary, and affects the form rather than the substance of the thing. If an entire assembly appoints itself on a nominating body and then names all of its members to one office or another, it amounts to the same as a committee of the whole for the nomination of officers and a distribution of officers to all.

In later years, since the Association has grown to gigantic proportions, it is true that this large committee has dwindled in comparison to the size of the body it represents. But the fact that the rule requires that all the states, districts, and territories shall be represented on the board of directors, secures a variety of interests in that board, which prevents the possibility of clannishness or misrule.

Should, however, it be deemed desirable to provide even a wider participation of the rank and file of the Association in the election of its directory, this could be easily effected by a constitutional provision permitting each state delegation to select its member of the nominating committee, leaving the president to select, as heretofore, for those states that decline or neglect to act. Practically, this would be a safeguard against any possible in-

fluence that might come from partisanship or political management, but it is quite difficult to conceive any circumstances wherein danger is to be apprehended from such source. All who agree, however, that the highest usefulness of the Association depends on the complete subordination of the political partisan element.

We may here properly inquire what the legitimate results are for which we should look to come from this annual gathering of teachers from the length and breadth of the land. The main answer to this is provided for us in the words of the original call issued in 1856. In the language already quoted, the Association should "concentrate the wisdom and power of numerous minds and distribute among all the experiences of all." This call was written by Dr. Daniel B. Hagar, then president of the Massachusetts Teachers' Association. It was stated at the Philadelphia meeting in 1857 that there were already in existence twenty-three state teachers' associations, besides larger and smaller associations not bounded by state lines,—such, for example, as the American Institute of Instruction in New England and the American Association for the Advancement of Education, which had been formed in Philadelphia. These associations had demonstrated the value of general conferences in which educational topics were discussed. The wisdom and power of many minds concentrated on the difficult problems of the profession brought light such as none had seen before. The accumulated experience of all was thus distributed to each. The individual teacher, in his uneven development, strong in some points and weak in others, found complementary strength in the experience of his fellow-teachers, strong where he was weak, and perhaps weak where he was strong.

The divine principle of vicariousness that prevails in

the spiritual world, rendering it possible for each man, woman, and child to participate profitably in the experience of another human being,—so that the spectacle of a deed and its consequences renders it entirely unnecessary to perform the deed itself in order to get what of good comes from doing it as a life experience,—this divine principle of vicariousness in the life of human souls at once explains for us the true function of teachers' associations, and also the function of education itself in its entirety. What, indeed, is all education except the re-enforcement of the individual by the experience of the family, the community, the nation, the race? Education is therefore properly defined as the elevation of the individual into participation in the life of the species.

While the brute inherits organically in his muscles and nerves and brain the experience of his progenitors in such a way that the life of his race appears as instinctive impulse, man, on the other hand, not only inherits the results of the life of his ancestry in the form of instincts and aspirations, but he can by language receive and communicate the outcome of his life direct. Hence his ability to collect within himself the results of others' lives is increased infinitely beyond that narrow line of hereditary descent; for he can, through language, avail himself of the sense-perception of others far removed in time and space, making himself thereby a sort of omnipresence in space and time. Then, too, he can avail himself in like manner of the thoughts and reflections of his fellow-men, especially the thoughts and reflections of those most gifted minds that have done most to solve the problems of life and explain the anomalies of experience. More than this, too, he learns not only through their perceiving and by their thinking on what they perceive, but he learns by seeing their doing, and by the story of their doing, what

to do himself and what to refrain from doing. Thus, by language, the individual is enabled to live vicariously the life of the race, and to live his own life vicariously for others. Whatever one does, goes into the reservoir of human experience as something of value; if it is a negative deed, bringing with it its punishment, the knowledge of it renders unnecessary the repetition of its like by others. If it is a positive deed, securing for it the normal development of the soul, then it is a precious discovery, and it may be adopted by all men as a new ethical form or moral law.

Thus the very principle of all education,—the principle that makes possible what we value as civilization in contrast to savage life,—this principle is appealed to as explaining and justifying the existence of a national educational association. “Concentrate the wisdom and power of numerous minds; distribute to each the accumulated experience of all.”

Who can say, looking back down the ladder of thirty-three years, that this beneficent process of giving and receiving has not characterized every stage of its ascent? Spiritual giving, we are taught, is not a giving which diminishes the supply of the giver. In material giving, there is a transfer which makes him who gives poorer by the amount of his gift. But he who imparts his experience to others, possesses all the more firmly all the fruits of his own experience. Every teacher who has risen in this National Educational Association to expound his own observations or reflections or to give the results of his experience has, in the act of doing it, helped himself first of all to see more clearly than before the true lesson of his life. In spiritual participation, there is no division or loss. In material things,—in food, clothing, and shelter,—to share is to divide and diminish the part that goes to each.

But these general principles we may admit and yet fail to see in the work of the National Educational Association anything worthy of being classed under such high rubrics. Let us, therefore, take up in detail, that all may recognize some of the phases of the teachers' work that have been under discussion at the annual gatherings.

I find, on looking over the table of contents of the annual volumes of proceedings, that there have been presented 241 papers on the five parts of the school system; namely: 28 on the kindergartens, 27 on primary work, 75 on high schools and colleges, 56 on normal schools, 45 on manual training and technical schools.

These 231 papers have all related, incidentally, to matters of course of study and methods. But besides these there were 21 papers relating especially to the philosophy of methods, 81 to various branches of the theory of education and psychology, 29 to the course of study, 10 to the peculiarities of graded and ungraded schools, 25 to musical instruction, 10 to natural sciences, 40 on drawing, and 24 to the important subject of moral and religious instruction. These make 240 additional papers on special themes of course of study and methods of discipline and management; in the aggregate, nearly 500 papers on these themes.

Besides these papers, there are others, on building, heating, and ventilation (3); national aid to education (14); education for Chinese, Indians, and colored people (8); on supervision of schools (10); on the uses and abuses of textbooks (9); on examinations of teachers and of pupils (8); on compulsory education (3); foreign educational systems (10); education and crime (2); on the best methods of keeping statistics (4); on the criticisms urged against our schools (8),—in all, nearly a hundred more papers on important questions.

We all remember with some remaining feelings of dismay the old-fashioned essays read at teachers' gatherings. The following titles will suggest them; "The Teachers' Motives"; "The Teacher and his Work"; "The Causes of Failure and Success in the Work of the Teacher"; "The Teacher's Ideal." Very often such titles introduced only goody-goody reflections on the personal character of the teacher. In the early days of the Association such essays were more frequent. One is glad to observe their growing rarity, not only in the National Educational Association, but also in state associations and in educational magazines.

Of course these 600 papers, relating to various points of school management, were only the half of the intellectual pabulum set forth at the annual gatherings. It is safe to say that the impromptu discussions called forth were at least another half. Where the undisciplined mind had flagged and failed to follow the thread of the written discourse, the oral discussion brought out vividly the points of the paper, and by vigorous opposition or defense aroused the powers of the weakling. The vigorous oral debate has here its tremendous advantages over the printed paper read in the educational periodicals.

We have not mentioned the advantage of personal contact of mind with mind. In these gatherings the young teacher sees those who have grown old in the service and who have acquired reputation for their work. He meets his equals and measures their ideals by his own. He learns to see the details of his profession from many different points of view. The impression derived from the printed page differs from that derived from personal conversation. Each has its advantages. The personal impression is more stimulating and provocative of imitation.

The cool study of the printed paper leads to deeper self-activity. Both are useful,—nay, indispensable.

It is obvious that for this personal lesson upon the teacher our recent large associations are far more valuable than the small gatherings of the early date; where three hundred met then, now we have three thousand. The visitor to the Association now sees ten times the number of eminent teachers and rejoices in a ten-fold opportunity for profit.

I do not think that I overestimate the value of this feature of the Educational Association when I call it one half. On this basis I shall call the direct aid received from the essays and papers read one fourth; the direct aid from the debates and discussions, one fourth; the direct aid from personal conversation with and observation of fellow-members of the convention, eminent persons, and otherwise, this, and the benefit of observation on that section of the country into which the Association takes the visitor, amounts to one half the direct aid that he gets at the Association.

Since 1870 the Association has been in process of forming departments for the further specialization of work. It has done this partly by absorbing existing associations devoted to special work and partly by forming new departments direct.

It absorbed the normal school and superintendents' associations, and in after years successively the departments of (*a*) higher instruction, (*b*) elementary instruction, (*c*) industrial education, (*d*) the National Council of Education, (*e*) the kindergarten, (*f*) of art education, (*g*) music instruction, and (*h*) secondary instruction; thus making ten departments in all. There has been since 1884 an educational exposition, which may be called the eleventh department.

Since these departments provide for the much-needed specialization of work, and furnish a counterpoise to the mighty swing of the general meetings of the Association, their influence is salutary. There is no doubt that much more can be done in this direction. There should be a department that unites those interested in the study of child life; another that unites the specialists who are at work in the mastery of foreign systems of education; one for students of the Herbartian educational experiments,—those that make so much of Robinson Crusoe as a center of school work and whose great word is “apperception.” Those who have read the educational essay that has made so much noise in England, and which bears the absurd title of “A Pot of Green Feathers,” I need not say, are already interested in this question of apperception, as the very center of educational psychology. The doctrine of apperception, briefly stated, is this: We not only perceive or see objects, but we recognize or apperceive them. When we apperceive we relate what we see to what we already knew before,—we sometimes call this inward digestion of what we see. Now education, it is evident enough, deals with this matter of recognizing or assimilating (apperceiving) the new material learned by relating it to what we knew before.

If a department of psychology were formed that held two meetings at each annual session, I doubt not that it would soon prepare some work which would gladly be given a place on the program of the general association, and certainly before it secured a place on the general program it would get into the old departments of elementary instruction or normal instruction, or into the superintendents' section or some other.

I would lay emphasis on this specializing of work indefinitely. Apart from the National Association such

specializing would have its danger ; but in the Association it at once adds strength and gains strength. There could be a department of statistical study wherein the few specialists who are interested in the science of statistics, in the new sense which is coming to be accentuated by sociologists, could confer together round a table. Round table discussions over specialities is in my opinion what is needed to introduce a new fountain of vitality into the Association. Not that the Association is failing in vitality, for it never had so much at any former period as it has now. But this new element of specialization is a new element of vitality which may make the annual visit twice as valuable as it has been hitherto. I have mentioned by way of examples of these round table departments,—those that should study child-life, foreign systems of education (say French, German, English, Chinese, etc.), or pedagogical movements like that of the Herbartians, or again educational psychology, or statistics. I would add other examples of specialization. Let the specialists in teaching English literature have a round table ; the specialists in teaching ancient history or modern history or the philosophy of history ; the specialists in teaching French or any modern language ; those specially interested in teaching fractions or any other part of arithmetic. These round table discussions could be called for any year. They could not be expected to discuss the same subject for two consecutive years. Here is just the trouble with our present departments. They have worked over the material ready to hand, and have no new material in the process of making. The Council of Education has formed a list of committees on a variety of subjects and stereotyped it once for all. The members of those cast-iron committees find themselves appointed to report on some subject which has no new fresh interest for them and they

do not see how to begin fresh work. We do not want any more reports on such general topics as high schools, or private schools, or co-education, or moral education, or educational psychology, but we do want specialized reports which focus the whole mind of the sub-committees on some special topic, within those more general topics such as (in the domain of moral education), the freedom of the will in the light of Ribot's work on *The Diseases of the Will*; or (in the domain of educational psychology) the effect of committing to memory by the so-called aids or arts of memory; or on the formation of logical habits of thinking; or the best method of cultivating a convenient memory for names; the true remedy for duplicate registration of pupils attending both winter and summer schools, a duplication which is common in most of the state school reports; on a legitimate mode of interesting the people in electing good members to the school board; on the proper manner of securing the interest of the public press in the good features of the public schools; on the effect of the private schools in raising or lowering the standard of respectability in the profession of teaching; on the best method of securing literary and scientific culture in a corps of teachers. No one of these topics would do for a second report; no one of them would do for a first report made by members of the Council not interested in it; the volunteer system is the only system for round-table work. It would be best generally to concentrate attention, and guide it by having a report made upon some particular book like Lange's work on Apperception, or Mrs. Jacobi's book on Science and Language study.

The general work of the Association, as a whole, should go on in deep ruts, but the special work of the departments should be specialized and always fresh and new.

This will take care of itself if there be a sufficiency of these small groups encouraged. Perhaps there are only four persons in the entire nation interested in some special topic. The National Association, with its facilities for cheap transportation and cheap board, furnishes the best opportunity each year for the meeting of these four persons, or any other similarly interested four persons. Perhaps the attraction of the particular interest would not be sufficient to draw together the four specialists. But the National Association adds a host of other attractions, and in the aggregate these are strong enough to prevail.

We wish to produce as many growing teachers as possible,—as many as possible who each year have found fresh leads and have distanced their former selves.

It seems to me, therefore, quite doubtful whether the division of the National Association into sectional associations, with which it alternates biennially, would not be rather a step backwards. It would perhaps break the continuity which is essential as a kind of background on which the specialization which we have discussed can best take place. It will certainly make the familiar faces that meet us from year to year, coming from a great distance,—as in the present meeting from Colorado and Texas,—it will make these faces less familiar to us, and different sections of the Union will be in less direct sympathy than formerly.

If I have studied aright this problem, it is not the general association that is in need of reform, but only the departments. These departments instead of breaking away from the type of the general association, as they should do, are imitating its organization when they ought to devote themselves to developing and fostering voluntary sub-committees or round tables devoted to special work.

The general association, with its wide scope, its great masses, its distinguished personalities, its cheap fares, its entertaining tours and its spectacle of great combination, and lastly with the great interest and substantial tributes of respect which it elicits from the business men of all parts of the country, and from the world in general outside the scholastic field,—the general association, with these reasons for being, should continue as it is.

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